

MEDIA RELEASE

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KZN Health MEC hails forensic pathology services for their heroic deeds

KwaZulu-Natal Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, has hailed all dedicated forensic pathology services staff throughout the province as the unsung heroes of the healthcare sector.

Speaking at an event in UThukela district (Ladysmith) today to mark 10 years since the Department took over Forensic Pathological Services (FPS) from the SAPS, MEC Dhlomo said that while certain challenges sometimes existed – such as the periodic shortage of certain tools of the trade – there was reason to celebrate.

He described FPS staff as a group of “selfless, compassionate and hardworking cadres,” while urging them not to forget the power of prayer to overcome some of the challenges that came with the job.

“One of the things that have made you survive is the faith that you have. No amount of money will ever meet the service that you give to humanity. Part of your payment will be in heaven,” he said.

He described FPS as one the most critical units in the Department, along with Emergency Medical Services. “If something goes wrong in these units, we would have a disaster.”

Since taking over the service on 01 June 2016, the Department had built new mortuaries; refurbished existing ones; taken decisions around the staffing; including auditing their skills, knowledge and competencies; and ensuring that there was not disruption during the takeover of the service.

Today the Department has 36 functional FPS facilities; eight state-of-the-art facilities; 24 that are still based at SAPS premises but run by the Department; four that are within hospital premises; two of these – in Phoenix and Pietermaritzburg – with a body capacity of 409 and 439 forensic pathology officer who are responsible for the collection and management of bodies.



MEC Dhlomo appealed to all staffers to all FPS to use the Employee Assistant Programme that is in place to help them deal with the demands of their job.

MEC Dhlomo, who holds a diploma in Forensic Pathology from the College of Medicine of South Africa, said his own interest in this sector was sparked by the FPS work that had been

expended on two tragic events a few years ago – the bus accident that claimed the lives of scores of Zulu maidens in Nongoma and the truck accident in Pinetown, in which 34 people demised.

He had also come to recognise that the anguish that is experienced by families of trauma victims who demise suddenly was sometimes lost on some people – and he sought to change this.

“When I was called in to help out at Pinetown FPS, I was initially hesitant. But after I had heard what FPS staff in charge of the truck accident scene in Pinetown had gone through, I decided there and then that I wanted to be trained in this vocation. Part of dealing with this diploma was to put myself in these people’s shoes. When I go to dissect a body in Pinetown, I just imagine that people are doing this everyday.”

Turning to the staff, MEC Dhlomo said: “You need to continue being prayerful about yourselves, so you can continue surviving. Not many people can survive in this job. You have to wake up with a new strength, and always be very close to your creator and ask Him to support. You need to develop your own energy to survive. I am extremely happy that despite your challenges, you have always put grieving families ahead.

“You are dealing with this trauma... decomposed bodies... every day. But you have no choice. It is extremely challenging, it is not nice to see, yet you see that every day. I felt it was important to come and recognise you today.”

Dr Dhlomo pledged to continue advocating for the career pathing and advancement of FPS staff.

ENDS

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